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THE GRANVILLE PERIOD

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Mr. Harper began teaching at Denison University, Granville, Ohio, in September, 1876, a year after his leaving Yale with the degree of Ph.D. This intervening year he had spent in the service of the Masonic College at Macon, Tenn. His election at Granville had occurred on the nomination of Professor Henry A. Rogers, who had known him at Yale, and he accepted, it was understood, in considerable part because Professor Rogers urged him to do so.

He was to be tutor—he later became principal—in the preparatory department in the college, subsequently known as Granville Academy. It was an arduous and responsible position for a youth of twenty—exactly his age at his accession—and the young doctor would not have been intrusted with it had not Rogers formed and expressed an exceedingly high opinion of his ability.

At first his youthful look and manner disconcerted not a few. His predecessors in office had been much older men. Some, if not all, of his colleagues were so. Indeed, he had a goodly number of pupils who were his seniors by several years. The standards of the school had always been very high. Its faculty had embraced as accomplished teachers as I have ever known. Professor Rogers, whom Harper succeeded as principal, was one of these. The college faculty contained classical and teaching talent of the first order, not surpassed by any with which I have ever been acquainted. In a word, the gentlemen with whom Harper was thrown in contact and compared upon coming to Granville, while able and willing to help him, were of a character to have discouraged a weaker man.

This was not the effect upon Harper. Quite the reverse. Without the slightest assumption or parade he proceeded to the business before him, which he began to dispatch with such address and ability that all apprehensions touching his success presently disappeared, giving way to high expectations. These in turn soon began

to be fulfilled. The man's second and later years at Granville were a continuous record of such fulfilment.

Dr. Harper did not, at Granville, in all things give promise of the eminence which he was destined to attain. He evinced no propensity or talent for writing. He had, apparently, no overmastering ambition in any particular direction. He certainly wished to work into teaching the Semitic tongues, if possible, but the slender likelihood, at first, of any opportunity in that direction did not seem to pain him acutely, and he addressed himself to the teaching of Greek and Latin, not only with the most unremitting assiduity, but also, so far as one could see, with extreme pleasure.

While always perfectly exemplary in conduct and very devout, he did not, during the years here under review, betray any special interest in theology, in biblical study, or in any of the great themes of religious philosophy. You would not have picked him out then as likely to head a department in a theological faculty, or to distinguish himself as an organizer of theological work in any branch. His interests were not speculative, but concrete. So far as I can recall, he relished the classic tongues less because of the history and literature to be got at through them than as a field for the application of his grammatical knowledge in reading by himself and in drilling others.

In view of this non-contemplative bent which Dr. Harper's mentality showed, some, when he was invited to permanent membership in the faculty of the Seminary at Morgan Park, urged him against acceptance. They felt sure of his success if he devoted himself to classical teaching, but feared his relative failure and dissatisfaction if he became a Semitist in a theological school. Had the call then come which subsequently carried him to Yale, all would have bidden him to accept; but at the time of his going to Morgan Park Semitic studies had nowhere begun to be cultivated as part of a liberal discipline.

It was at Granville that Dr. Harper took—or renewed—his stand as a Christian man. I dare say he regarded himself a believer before this; but, I should think, did not regard as of great seriousness any religious profession he might have made earlier. He desired baptism by immersion, reaching this purpose entirely through

thought of his own, not at all by others' exhortation. It was the writer's privilege to be his attendant in making preparation for the ordinance, and during and after the same.

In this episode of his experience already appeared the Harper of later life. There was no period of wavering, of alternate advance and retreat. Duty made itself known clearly, and was performed with promptness and decision.

Still more prophetic of what it was to be at his maturity was Harper's early teaching. Teaching was his delight, and his meat and drink. He looked forward to each class period as to a feast. Teaching did not weary or cloy him. Before his class his mind and his body also were all activity. His thought was instantaneous. Question or correction followed answers like a flash. He would scrutinize with precision half a dozen pupils' several work at the blackboard, hinting, warning, correcting, praising, gently ridiculing, while at the same time attending to recitation after recitation by other members of the class. His comments were clear, concise, exact, and helpful, calculated to inspire and encourage, and not to depress. His own knowledge, always ample, ready, and precise, was never paraded, though always apparent in spite of him, and admired by everyone.

It was model teaching. Bright pupils shot forward phenomenally; dull ones made good progress. All worked to the best of their ability, made to share what seemed to be their teacher's conviction that, unless they became efficient classicists, some terrible fate certainly awaited them—in this world at any rate, and possibly hereafter. No scolding was used, no mean sarcasm. Diligence, attention, punctuality, and hard study were expected as matters of course, and were consequently forthcoming.

Like every true teacher, Principal Harper took a deep interest in his pupils. He loved them. Not alone their progress in study engaged his thought, but their manners and morals as well. Hence not alone the brilliant boys, whom he praised and idolized, cherished strong affection for him, but the slower ones as well, all being certain that he was seeking their good, and that naught but good could come from compliance with his precepts. Under such a master, drill could not mean drudgery, or obedience slavery.

Once several of Dr. Harper's students fell to visiting a saloon. Informed of this, and determined to end the habit, Dr. Harper in person "raided" the saloon, finding a number of the culprits, whom he duly admonished, taking occasion also to give the proprietor a piece of his mind.

The above paragraphs pave the way for the remark that already in his Granville days Dr. Harper was an extraordinary disciplinarian. Student rows were never a feature of his administration. This was partly because his pupils loved him, partly because he gave them plenty of work, and most of all because his air and manner spread a genial seriousness through the entire student body. No American educator has, I think, handled so great a number of students as Dr. Harper did, with so little friction.

Assistants as well as students felt and yielded to this quiet, natural mastery. There was nothing of the "boss" about Dr. Harper. He did not dictate or lay down the law, but got his wishes obeyed through reason, argument, and that indefinable force characterizing all natural leaders, well denominated the power of "bringing things to pass." This aspect of Mr. Harper's many-sided nature was clearly in evidence early in his Granville period. So also were his incessant industry, his titanic power for toil, and his scrupulous method in all his work.

In 1878, the Theological Seminary at Morgan Park being unexpectedly in need of instruction in Hebrew, midyear Dr. Harper was mentioned as able to supply this lack. Overtures were made to him, and by him accepted, subject to approval by the Denison trustees. The plan was that he should spend the winter at Morgan Park, returning to Granville after the seminary closed in April, to complete the year's work at the academy. With a great deal of reluctance, making this decision by them a cardinal event in Harper's career, the Denison authorities acceded to the arrangement. For the remainder of the year the understanding was that Harper's main work lay at Granville, and that he was aiding at Chicago only in a temporary way. Little by little, however, his relation with the seminary he was serving so well became substantive, and it could not spare him. The transference thither of his entire activity was but a matter of time, to occur so soon as Denison could make shift to spare him.